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Week in Review

November 14, 2016

As a service to the clients and friends of Governmental Policy Group, Inc. and RH Resources we would like to extend the following weekly update of events happening around Capitol Square.

FY16-17 BUDGET

Ohio's FY17 budget shortfall doubled over the last month, going from nearly \$72 million below estimates through September to \$160 million below estimates through October, according to preliminary figures released by the Office of Budget and Management (OBM). Fueling October's \$88.1 million shortfall was the sales tax, which was down nearly \$48.3 million from the estimates for the month. Specifically, the non-auto sales tax was down nearly \$42.9 million or 5.4 percent, while the auto sales tax was down nearly \$5.4 million or 4.7 percent.

EDUCATION

The State Board of Education will look at an analysis of high school students' testing performance as it weighs local school officials' pleas to adjust diploma requirements they say could leave too many students unable to graduate.

ELECTIONS 2016

Thanks to a late surge in early voting, a record number of Ohioans cast absentee ballots this year, Secretary of State Jon Husted announced. Husted said there was a greater number of people voting in-person than in previous presidential elections, but early voting by mail was down. In total, Husted said about 10,931 more people cast an early absentee ballot than in 2012, the first year Husted's office mailed absentee ballot applications to all registered voters.

Republicans were feeling very good about their showing statewide and nationally Wednesday morning as U.S. Sen. Rob Portman (R-OH) breezed to reelection, the GOP picked up a seat in the Ohio Senate and Ohio House and maintained control of both houses of Congress as Ohio re-elected all incumbent congressional representatives including 12 Republicans, and presidential candidate Donald Trump signaled his nationwide victory with a nine-point win in the Buckeye State.

There were no big surprises in Tuesday night's races for the General Assembly, with Republicans picking up one seat in each house. Democrat Sen. Lou Gentile (Steubenville) lost his seat to Republican Frank Hoagland, and in the House, the open 94th House District seat currently held by Democrat Rep. Debbie Phillips (Albany) was won by Republican Jay Edwards. This will give the GOP a 66-to-33 majority in the Ohio House and a 24-to-9 majority in the Ohio Senate of the 132nd General Assembly.

Republicans swept the three Ohio Supreme Court seats on election day, with the closest race occurring between First District Court of Appeals Judge Pat Fischer and Cuyahoga County Common Pleas Judge John O' Donnell.

Voters across Ohio approved 115 of 150 school tax issues during the Nov. 8 general election, the Ohio School Boards Association (OSBA) announced. That translates to a 77 percent passage rate -- down from 2015, when 93 of 110 school tax issues passed for an 85 percent passage rate.

EMPLOYMENT/UNEMPLOYMENT

The national unemployment rate saw a slight drop in October, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), going to 4.9 percent from 5.0 percent in September. Total nonfarm payroll employment rose by 161,000 jobs, the BLS said, as job gains were found in health care, professional and business services, and financial activities.

GAMING

Ohio's four casinos brought in less revenue in October than a year ago, according to numbers released by the Ohio Casino Control Commission, while Ohio's racinos were up in revenues. According to the commission, the casinos earned \$62.6 million in October, down from the \$66.8 million in October 2015, and down from the \$63.9 million in September.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY/STATEHOUSE

House Republicans announced the re-election of Rep. Cliff Rosenberger (R-Clarksville) as speaker for the 132nd General Assembly. Others elected to leadership positions include Rep. Kirk Schuring (R-Canton) as speaker pro tempore; Rep. Dorothy Pelanda (R-Marysville) as majority floor leader;

Rep. Sarah LaTourette (R-Chesterland) as assistant majority floor leader; Rep.-elect Tom Patton (R-Strongsville) as majority whip; and Rep. Robert McColley (R-Napoleon) as assistant majority whip.

GOVERNOR

The governor made the following other appointments during the week:

- Cynthia A. Hafner of Lewis Center (Delaware County) appointed to the Environmental Review Appeals Commission for a term beginning Nov. 4, 2016, and ending Oct. 22, 2022.
- Jon B. Schwantes Sr. of Dublin (Franklin County) reappointed to the Ohio Humanities Council for a term beginning Nov. 9, 2016, and ending Oct. 30, 2019.
- Sheriff Vernon P. Stanforth of Washington Court House (Fayette County) reappointed to the Ohio Peace Officer Training Commission for a term beginning Nov. 10, 2016, and ending Sept. 20, 2019.
- Sharlene Ramos-Chesnes of Stow (Summit County) to the Northeast Ohio Medical University Board of Trustees for a term beginning Nov. 10, 2016, and ending Sept. 21, 2025.
- K. Paul St. Germain of Upper Arlington (Franklin County) reappointed to the Ohio Humanities Council for a term beginning Nov. 10, 2016, and ending Oct. 30, 2019.

MARIJUANA

The Ohio Department of Commerce (DOC) posted a request for information (RFI) on the processing and testing of medical marijuana for Ohio's Medical Marijuana Control Program. The inquiry closed Thursday, Nov. 10.

PEOPLE

State Fire Marshal Larry L. Flowers announced that, effective Monday, Nov. 14, Kenneth J. Klouda will assume the role of chief of the Fire Prevention Bureau.

STATE GOVERNMENT

Lili Reitz, former executive director of the Ohio State Dental Board, has been charged with a first-degree misdemeanor ethics violation. According to an investigation from Inspector General Randall Meyer's office, Reitz wrongfully shared confidential information with a former board member. Reitz faces a maximum penalty of 180 days in jail and a \$1,000 fine.

LEGISLATIVE ACTIVITY:

Legislators return to session this week after a summer-long break for the election.